



Year of the Family

2014 is the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family. For Messy Month 2014, we've decided to celebrate the gift of family in its widest sense—both the messily diverse families who come to Messy Churches, the messy family of the church into which we've been adopted and the messy family that is the community in which we live—locally and globally. So we celebrate the sense of being family—being connected, being significant to others—whether we're single or married, young or old, with or without children, in stable relationships or short term ones. This isn't Mothering Sunday, Fathers' Day or Grandparents' Day! There won't be shelves of cards in the shops, but we can still celebrate Family.

We've chosen to think about the way that as family we can make each other **safe**, so that everyone thrives, especially the younger or more vulnerable members of our family. This might be about creating and celebrating safety within a household or it might be making the wider community a safe space in which everyone can thrive, whatever their age, mental/physical ability, gender, race or sexual

orientation. It's not about being cosy and cotton-wool-wrapped, as it's when we feel safest that we are most free to take risks. Ultimately, we rejoice that through Jesus, everyone from every background can belong to his family or household and can be certain of his loving rescue even beyond death itself.

Safety might mean providing for physical needs: food, clothing, shelter, hugs. Or emotional needs: unconditional love, acceptance, empathy, security. Or spiritual needs: encouraging each other to be the people God made us to be, fulfilling our human potential, imagination, creativity, hope, openness to risk. It includes aspects of living together like eating, having fun, courtesy, self-control, forgiveness, appreciation of differences.

So we've put together a mosaic of stories and images from the Old and New Testaments to help people think about how grateful we can be for each other and how we can all make our communities/homes 'safe' for the benefit of 'family' in its widest possible meaning.

This pack contains:

- 1** Details of how to support BRF's Messy Church ministry
- 2** Ideas for bringing Messy and other congregations together
- 3** Story and prayer for gathered worship
- 4** Stories of Messy families
- 5** Craft and activities
- 6** A PowerPoint presentation on Messy Church that can be personalised with photos and information of your own Messy Church



1 Details of how to support BRF's Messy Church ministry

Messy Church is resourced, supported and enabled by the charity The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) as one of its core ministries. It is largely funded by grants and donations. Would you be able to help enable the growth and ongoing development of Messy Churches, large and small, wherever they are found?

Any gifts given to BRF's Messy Church ministry go specifically towards the work of Messy Church.

For more information about how you and your church can support the growing Messy Church ministry, please go to: www.messychurch.org.uk/support-messy-church

Ways you could help

- give a personal donation
- encourage your church to support Messy Church as part of its regular giving
- pray for everyone involved in the Messy Church ministry: Messy Church Team (Lucy, Jane, Martyn and Carole), the Regional Coordinators, the wider team at BRF, and leaders of Messy Churches throughout the UK and further afield



2 Ideas for bringing Messy and other congregations together

A Messy Service

Invite your Sunday service planners to join you in planning a Messy Service for all ages together. Choose the best all-age time for the Sunday service. Advertise well in advance so that no one turns up surprised to see any changes. Incorporate a clip from the Messy Church DVD to show how denominations all over the world are involved in Messy Church. Make space for everyone to enjoy crafts together. Or invite the Sunday congregations to a one-off Messy Church.

A Messy Trip Out

Organise a family-friendly walk or cinema trip, or visit a theme park, Safari Park, leisure centre, the seaside, National Trust venue or similar.

A Messy Project

Look at your immediate community area. Do a litter pick or garden tidy, a paint job or bulb planting. Incorporate food somehow—finish with a meal.

A Messy Fun Day

Bring out your gazebos and bouncy castles for a community few hours of cake sales, face painting, paddling pool beach, craft tables, 'Blooming Messy' bedding plant sale, beer tent, fresh strawberries and a BBQ. Or organise a car treasure hunt ending with a BBQ.

A Messy Meal

A picnic, Messy Master Chef competition, afternoon tea, BBQ, Messy Cup Cake Competition, Messy Breakfast with croissants and bacon.

A Messifestival

Arrange for each organisation in the church plus Messy Church to organise a gazebo activity, invite a band, a local VIP, family overnight camp. Start Saturday lunchtime and end after Sunday church with lunch.

Messy Aid

Help your community groups by inviting local charities to take part in a Table Sale in the church hall. Each charity organises their own table for display/selling and the congregations organise the flyers, posters and refreshments.

Messy Messterpieces

Discover the gifts and talents of your congregations with an exhibition/crafts/skills event where anyone can show or display how talented they are at knitting, painting, cooking, embroidery, calligraphy, brick laying, and so on.

Messy Awards Party

Send personal invitations to all the teams, workers and their families in the church to a glamorous night with food, red carpet, silly awards (best donations bucket shaker, best grinning welcomer, messiest person, and so on) and include the children. Everyone must dress up!

Messy Greetings

Smile, wave, click! Take a photo of your congregations waving and post on to your website or Facebook, or email to other churches. Find another Messy Church with which to 'twin'. Add a written welcoming/greeting caption.

Other opportunities:

- Invite all congregations to collect items for craft collages or Bring and Buys.
- Take Messy cakes into the coffee time after services.
- Present the Sunday church with a gift: decorate a table cloth, a kneeler or a banner.
- Sunday church could present Messy Church with a gift.
- Ask the Sunday congregations if anyone would like to be Messy Pray-ers.
- Present the Sunday congregations with Messy Church prayer bookmarks.
- Have a recruitment drive for more leaders.



3 Story and prayer for gathered worship

You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. **(Ephesians 2:9, THE MESSAGE)**

Tell this story with as much encouragement as you can for people to join in with the repeated bits.

Once upon a time a person—we'll call him Malcolm—had a huge, safe, beautiful house with a lovely garden. Malcolm decided to have a family to fill the house. But he decided he would choose exactly who would go in his family.

Malcolm was a man, so he decided there would only be men in his family.

Malcolm had black hair, so he decided he would just have men with black hair in his family.

Malcolm liked playing pingpong, so he decided there would only be men with black hair who liked playing

pingpong in his family.

He was rich, so he decided only men with black hair who liked playing pingpong and were rich would be in his family.

Malcolm was British, so he decided that only men with black hair who liked playing pingpong and were rich and British would be in the family.

Malcolm liked cauliflower-flavour crisps so he decided that only men with black hair who liked playing pingpong and were rich and British and liked cauliflower flavoured crisps would be in the family.

Malcolm was 38 years old, so... well, you can guess the rest.

So there they were, the very special, very happy, very exclusive family of 38-year-old British rich men with black hair, a pingpong table in the living room and plenty of strange crisps in the kitchen.

But when Malcolm looked round at his family of male, black-haired, pingpong-playing, rich, British, strange-crisp-eating 38-year-olds, he knew instinctively something wasn't right.

'Something is not right!' he said to his family. 'What are we going to do with the other packets of crisps in the multipack? How will we all fit around the pingpong table at once? What will happen when one of our family's hair turns grey... or falls out?' The black-haired pingpong players looked at each other in horror. 'And,' continued Malcolm, 'what about all the people who would enjoy being part of this family, who would love to learn to play pingpong and who could enjoy the things that our money can buy? What about the fun we would have if different people joined us—people who are 28 or eight or 98? People who are women or children? People who would love being in this huge, safe, beautiful house with its lovely garden? People who might eat up the other flavours of crisps?'

The family looked at each other. And they talked in little groups. And they decided...

Well, I wonder what you think they decided?

- Do you think they decided to let everyone into the family, even though those people were different from them?
- Or do you think they decided to stay safe and cosy as they were?
- I wonder how hard it was to make that decision?

[If appropriate, you could have half the congregation being pro and half being anti and have a short debate.]

Of course Malcolm's family doesn't really exist. But we sometimes take it for granted that here in God's family, anyone can belong. Sometimes we forget how amazing it is that absolutely anybody is welcome. It doesn't matter what country they come from, what they look like, what sort of a life they've lived up to now, how rich they are or what they like eating: because of what Jesus did on the cross, the doors to God's huge, safe, beautiful house are wide open to everyone who wants to belong to this family.

Listen to the way Paul explains it in a letter to people who had never been allowed to be part of God's family up till then:

[You might want to display a picture of the family of God in all its diversity.]

Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.

That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

(Ephesians 2:16–22, THE MESSAGE)

God wants us all to belong so that we're not lonely and always have people to help us. That's why he invented the church! A huge, safe, beautiful household. So all of us—no matter who we are or what we've done or where we've come from—can belong to the wonderful household of God because of what Jesus has done. How amazing!

Prayers

Let's join together in a shouting prayer. All you need to do is call out the right word *for you* at the end of each line, and this will be different from what the person next to you calls out. Then, because we're one big family, we'll all say together: 'And I belong in your family!'

Thank you, God, that my hair is...

And I belong in your family!

Thank you, God, that my eyes are...

And I belong in your family!

Thank you, God, that I like eating...

And I belong in your family!

Thank you, God, that what I like doing best is...

And I belong in your family!

Thank you, God, that the place I come from is...

And I belong in your family!

Thank you, God, that because of what Jesus did on the cross, I've got all these people round me to be my brothers and sisters and grannies and grandads and uncles and aunties and mums and dads and children, people like...

And I belong in your family!



4 Stories of Messy Families

From Liverpool

At our Messy Church on Saturday I sat to eat with a family who have become very regular. They have a ten-year-old daughter who volunteers to do everything and a three-year-old son who is shy. I found out that their son 'plays' at Messy Church at home. He waits until enough people are in the lounge then shouts, 'Welcome to Messy Church! We will sing "My God is a Great Big God!"' (his favourite). He then sings loudly and at the end he says, 'Goodbye everybody. Thank you for coming to Messy Church' and shoos everyone out of the lounge!

A Messy Family Story

A small rural church in the north-west with a normal congregation of maybe a dozen, most of whom are past retirement age, has for the past six months been helping to run a Messy Church. This has drawn in quite a few families with children from the broader local community. The benefit hasn't all been for the families and children coming into the Messy Church, though.

Several of the congregation live on their own and—although they wouldn't complain—are beginning to experience a certain amount of isolation and even loneliness, accompanied by decreased mobility that has come with advancing age. Most of these have found something of a new lease of life by getting involved with Messy Church and the local families. They thoroughly enjoy helping, preparing and serving food, and—most of all—chatting with the children and their parents, praying for them, and taking an interest in their lives outside of Messy Church. In two cases 'honorary grannies' seem to have been inaugurated!

In a small way, Messy Church here has helped provide a surrogate 'family in the flesh' for these older people, especially for those whose own families live much further away and may be seen seldom. And also for the children, introducing them to an older generation with whom they would otherwise have little contact.

(Thanks to Simon Martin for passing this on.)

What are your Messy Church Family stories?



5 Crafts and activities

... to explore the theme of 'Making a safe place for family'

If possible, set up the room with some examples of 'safe spaces'. Bring in some pop-up tents; create a 'quiet zone' with interesting lighting and music and gentle things to do inside it; have some extra-large cardboard boxes lying around to decorate as dens, hide in or create with.

1 Arks

You will need

Cardboard boxes, sticky tape, scissors, old bedsheets or duvet covers, string

Junk model an ark large enough to fit the whole Messy Church into for the celebration. When everyone is inside, close the door and cover over the 'roof' with sheets as far as possible.

Talk about: God making a safe space for Noah and his family, and Noah making a safe space for the animals. What places feel as safe as the ark to you? (Genesis 6—7)

2 Camping stove for Abraham and Sarah

You will need

Open tuna or small catfood cans, corrugated cardboard, candle wax, cheesegrater, strong scissors, protective gloves, safety goggles, matches, long-handled spoon, marshmallows, long wooden skewers soaked in water

Cut a length of corrugated cardboard across the ridges so that it's the same height as the tin. Grate your candlewax on top of the strip of cardboard. Grate some into the tin too. Roll the cardboard strip up tightly like a swiss roll with a wax filling and put it into the tin so that the spiral is showing on top. Grate more wax over it. (An easier way is to melt the wax and pour it over the 'swiss roll' in the tin, but this requires close supervision.) Stick a match into the roll and carefully light it with another match. When the flame has caught, use it to toast marshmallows with. Keep adding wax with a long-handled spoon if the

flame dies down. (This activity is also in the Christian Aid Messy Church session)

Talk about: the way Abraham and Sarah let their household take a risk and set out on an adventure. They would have needed camping gear! What was the last risky thing you or your family did? (Genesis 6—7)

3 Joseph's Egyptian hummus

You will need

Tinned or boiled and cooled chickpeas, garlic paste or real garlic, lemon juice, cumin, salt, pitta bread, bowls, forks, pestle and mortar if available

Take a proportion of the chickpeas, garlic, lemon juice, cumin and salt—lots of chickpeas to a tiny amount of all the other ingredients, but start off with small amounts and adjust according to taste. You can also use sesame seed paste, but allergies may prevent this. Put them in a small bowl and mash up with a fork or pulverise with the pestle and mortar. Eat on pieces of pitta bread.

Talk about: the way you've made something Egyptian: we know the Ancient Egyptians ate chickpeas and garlic so they probably had something like hummus with their bread. Remind people of the time Joseph (of the dream coat) called his family to a safe place in Egypt where there was plenty of food, when they had been starving back home in Canaan. Food is important for helping people feel safe and comfortable. (Genesis 45)

4 Reed Sea Escape

You will need

Playdough, remote controlled vehicles, batteries, a 'terrain' to represent the bed of the Reed Sea—mud, shells, obstacles of your choice, chasms. You could have real mud and do it outside or you could have a length of brown or black fabric with boxes underneath to make it uneven.

If you can't get remote controlled vehicles, have some carts on wheels that you can pull across by a long rope or pulley system

Get Moses and the Hebrews across the Reed Sea in the vehicles! Make figures of playdough to represent the Hebrews and put them in or on the vehicles. Can you get them from one side to the other without them falling out?

Talk about: God gave Moses a special job: to get the Hebrews to a safe place where they would be free and no longer slaves. Who needs rescuing from some sort of slavery today? Whose job is it to rescue them? (Exodus 14)

5 Boaz' blanket

You will need

A blanket, embroidery thread, needles, scissors

Invite everyone to embroider an ear of corn on to the blanket. A really easy way is to make a good big ordinary running stitch (say, about 2cm long) and make the next stitch half way along it and at right angles to it. Then sew the next stitch halfway along stitch 2 and at right angles to it, and so on until you have a very stylised ear of corn.

Talk about: the way the rich Boaz (Ruth's distant relative) made the refugee Ruth safe from hunger by letting her gather corn in his field and by letting her sleep under his blanket (probably best not to go into details on that one in a family setting). He gave her what he didn't need to meet her needs. What do we have that we don't actually need that could help other families feel safe? Talk about the work of Food Banks or other local charities. Talk about the way family keeps you safe and how good it is to keep in touch with members of your extended family.

(If you need a smaller activity, you could sew individual small circles of felt with the ear of corn and mount them on card with a safety pin as a badge) (Ruth 2)

6 Esther's crown

You will need

Card, stick-on gems or cellophane in different colours from toffees, sequins, shiny stuff, glue, scissors

Adult version: make a tiara with craft wire and clear shiny beads

Other version: cut a general tiara shape from a large clear plastic bottle and drip a design on with glitter glue

Make a crown and decorate it.

Talk about: the way Queen Esther kept her big family of the Jewish people safe from an unjust law when Haman plotted to have them all killed. Have a very potted version of the story ready.

Esther used her power to make the powerless safe. Who can you think of who does that? Anyone at work? School? Home? In your country? (Esther 5)

7 Proverbs mother's house

You will need

A range of smallish cardboard boxes, like fruit juice cartons, shoe boxes, cereal packets; paint, brushes, water, scissors, coloured paper, card pieces, pens

Make a house from the box by painting it with thick paint (using the spout as a chimney if a fruit juice carton). Stick on 'windows' and 'doors' made from coloured paper and add any other details you want to personalise it.

Talk about: In the book of Proverbs, there is a Super Mum described, who not only runs a business but makes her home a safe, happy place for her family too. What can you do to keep making your home a safe place for the whole family? (Proverbs 31)

8 A place of refuge prayer

You will need

Playdough, a tray to display it on with two sections, one like a nasty pigpen and one like a lovely farm, tools

This is a prayer activity. Remind people of the story of the boy who ran away from home and ended up in a horrible scary pig pen. But when he needed to, he came back home to the farm and found safety and clean clothes and a big hug waiting for him.

Invite people to make a model in playdough of two things. First something that makes them feel scared or anxious, like a bully, a bill or a zipwire. Place this model in the 'pigpen'. Then make something or somewhere that makes them feel safe. It might be grandma's hug or a duvet or a high mountain or a den. Place this in the 'farm'.

Ask God to be as close to you in the scary place as he is in the safe place. (Luke 15)

9 Decorated umbrella

You will need

A picture of Jesus on the cross from a children's Bible storybook (to avoid really gruesome ones and thus complaints), old umbrellas or one large umbrella, string, scissors, strong tape, holepunch, card, stickers for decoration, coloured pens

Decorate the umbrella with dangly families on strings: cut out people shapes from card (make

as many as you like for members of your family). Decorate with stickers or coloured pens and make a hole to thread string through and dangle from the edge of the umbrella by sticking the string on with tape.

Talk about: the way Jesus made sure his mum would be safe and looked after even when he was on the cross, by telling John to look after her from then on. Our family and friends—and even our community—provide a shelter for us when we're upset, just like an umbrella provides a shelter from the rain or snow. (John 19)

10 Fruit of the Spirit printing

You will need

Recycled polystyrene or foam meat trays, well washed, scissors, sharp pencils, paper, paint, paint tray, water, window-wiper squeegee tool

Cut a flat rectangle from a polystyrene box or tray. Choose which fruit of the spirit you would most like to help your family or neighbourhood be a happier place. Write it on the polystyrene rectangle and draw patterns around it using a sharp pencil so that you make grooves for every line. Smooth a thin layer of watery paint over the whole tile with a squeegee window-wiper. Print on to paper.

Talk about: how the fruit of the spirit helps our families and communities to become safer places for everyone to live. Where do you see this fruit alive and well at home, at school, at work? (Galatians 5)



Click here for a [PowerPoint presentation](#) on Messy Church.